

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, H. A.)

SUBJECT: WASHPOST ARTICLE, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28,
"MORALE LOW AT MOSCOW EMBASSY", BY PETER OSNOS

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, ARTICLE READS AS FOLLOWS: MOSCOW,
FEB. 27: AMERICAN DIPLOMATS IN MOSCOW HAVE WRITTEN A 'VERY
STRONG' LETTER TO TOP STATE DEPT OFFICIALS DEMANDING TO BE
TOLD THE FULL EXTENT OF THE RADIATION PROBLEM AT THE
EMBASSY HERE AND WHETHER IT REPRESENTS A SERIOUS HEALTH
HAZARD, SOURCES SAID TODAY.

MORALE IN THE EMBASSY, ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT
AMERICAN POSTS ABROAD, HAS PLUMMETED, SINCE REPORTS OF THE
RADIATION BEGAN TO CIRCULATE THREE WEEKS AGO, THE SOURCES
SAID. ALTHOUGH EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN BRIEFED, A FULL EXPLANA-
TION OF THE SITUATION INCLUDING ITS CAUSES AND ITS DANGERS HA
BEEN WITHHBLD.

THE LETTER WAS DRAFTED LAST WEEK BY THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE
AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION AND WAS INTENDED FOR
SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER. AT THE REQUEST OF
SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICIALS, ONLY A COPY OF THE LETTER WAS
SENT TO WASHINGTON WITH THE ORIGINAL GOING TO AMBASSADOR
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WALTER J. STOESSEL.

'PEOPLE ARE INCENSED,' SAID ONE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THE LETTER. SO FAR NO RESPONSE HAS BEEN RECEIVED AND FURTHER ACTION--INCLUDING POSSIBLE LEGAL ACTION-- IS BEING CONSIDERED.

AT THE OUTSET, THE IMPRESSION GIVEN TO EMBASSY EMPLOYEES WAS THAT RADIATION WAS CAUSED SOLELY BY SOVIET SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT WHICH INCLUDED MICROWAVE BEAMS FOCUSED ON THE EMBASSY. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON THIS WEEK HOWEVER, THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE SOVIET RADIATION WAS TO BLOCK AMERICAN EAVESDROPPING.

IN ANY EVENT, THE TRUE STORY IS APPARENTLY KNOWN TO VERY FEW PEOPLE IN THE EMBASSY, PERHAPS ONLY STOESSEL HIMSELF. KISSINGER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAY THE MATTER IS BEING HANDLED, IT IS UNDERSTOOD, AND HE HAS STRESSED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT IT IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE. HE SAID THAT 'DISCUSSIONS' ARE UNDER WAY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

SINCE MONDAY, SAM ZWEIFEL, A STATE DEPT PHYSICIAN, HAS BEEN IN MOSCOW PERFORMING BLOOD TESTS ON ALL EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THESE TESTS WERE PRECIPITATED BY DISCOVERY OF SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AT THE EMBASSY, AS A REPORT FROM WASHINGTON TODAY SUGGESTED, OR ARE SIMPLY A PRECAUTION.

ONE EXPLANATION FOR DR. ZWEIFEL'S PRESENCE IS THAT THE REGULAR EMBASSY PHYSICIAN, THOMAS JOHNSON, IS ON A VACATION THAT WAS POSTPONED WHEN THE RADIATION ISSUE SURFACED.

(IN WASHINGTON, THE STATE DEPT SAID IT HAS SENT A MEDICAL TECHNICIAN TO MOSCOW TO CONDUCT BLOOD TESTS ON U.S. EMBASSY PERSONNEL WHO MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE MICROWAVE EMISSIONS. WILLIAM WATSON, THE DEPT'S MEDICAL DIRECTOR, SAID: 'THE MEDICAL DIVISION HAS FOUND NO MEDICAL PROBLEMS THAT IT BELIEVES TO BE RELATED TO THE SITUATION AT THE EMBASSY.')

THE REPORT FROM WASHINGTON ALSO SAID THAT STOESSEL SUFFERED UNCLASSIFIED

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FROM ANEMIA, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN AGGRAVATED BY THE RADIATION HERE. THE EMBASSY HAS ALREADY DENIED AN EARLIER REPORT THAT STOESSEL IS ILL, BUT THE AMBASSADOR REFUSED TO COMMENT ON TODAY'S PLANS TO LEAVE MOSCOW FOR REASSIGNMENT. STOESSEL HAS BEEN HERE FOR TWO YEARS.

AT EARLIER BRIEFINGS AND AGAIN TODAY, EMBASSY OFFICIALS STRONGLY IMPLIED -- BUT DID NOT SAY DIRECTLY -- THAT THERE

APPEARS TO BE NO GREAT ER FROM THE RADIATION TO PEOPLE
LIVING IN OR WORKING AT THE EMBASSY. BUT THE UNCERTAINTY

IS APPARENTLY BEGINNING TO HAVE ITS EFFECT ON SOME EMBASSY
PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES.

'WE HAVE A NEED AND A RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT,'
SAID ONE ANGRY AMERICAN. 'HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO
CONTINUE?' INGERSOLL

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